

# The Sheltered Workshop Update



Dept. of Elem. & Sec. Education, Division of Special Education

Larry L. Young, Director

## NEW ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Melodie Friedebach has been selected to serve as the new assistant commissioner for the Division of Special Education in the Department, effective May 1. She replaces Dr. Stephen Barr who retired at the end of last year.

Ms. Friedebach has worked in Division of Special Education for the past 21 years. She has served in several capacities in the state education agency, most recently as coordinator of special education services.

"Melodie is well known within the education community, and she is respected as a leader in her field, and particularly in the area of early childhood special education. She shares my desire to improve our services and reduce bureaucracy for local schools," said Commissioner King.

"I am committed to improving educational results for children with disabilities throughout Missouri. We need a unified educational system that includes children with disabilities in all aspects of school activities and that is accountable for its services to children and families. I am excited about dealing with the challenges of this new position," Friedebach said.

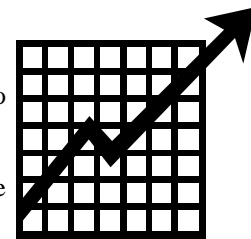
Ms. Friedebach has been the Department's primary liaison with federal education officials, and she is an expert on federal policy governing special education. Currently, she serves on the board of directors of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

She resides in Jefferson City. Her husband, James is the director of Assessment for DESE.

## THE NEW ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Many workshop managers lately have been telling me that they are quite busy. Many shops are operating on Saturdays and many are also beginning to work on their waiting lists. I'm very glad that the economy seems to be turning around. Workshop full time equivalents (FTE) are increasing on the average of 2% this year. The budget is going to be somewhat adversely affected by the increase in FTE, currently about a two week shortfall is projected for the end of this year. Hopefully the increase in business will offset the shortfall.

Many of us anticipated that there would be a big crunch when the economy started to turn around due to the fact that businesses were cutting back on inventories. As The Kiplinger Letter so clearly states, "Last year's big inventory slide is reversing, accounting for half of the production increase that businesses are experiencing this quarter. Businesses have started to restock in anticipation of increased demand." Even the normally conservative fed chief, Alan Greenspan, has provided an optimistic note regarding the economy. Therefore, we must be on the road to recovery.



What can you do to be a part of this new economy? You and your staff need to make your presence known in the community. If you aren't already doing it get involved in as many civic activities and organizations as you possibly can with the chamber of commerce being at the top of the list. Volunteer to present programs at civic clubs. If you don't like public speaking ask your field supervisor or myself to present the program for you.

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## IT DOESN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT

I was visiting with a manager the other day and we were talking about workshop growth. This manager said to me, "It doesn't happen by accident." What was meant was that there had to be an effort on the part of management, the board, and others to create growth. It isn't going to just happen. This doesn't just apply to growth; it applies to changes, improvements, and opportunities as well.

There are a lot of positive aspects to the sheltered workshop program here in Missouri, but there could be a lot of improvements. I would like to see every manager and board committed to safety. I'm afraid this isn't the case currently. There are some managers who pay lip service to safety, but they aren't committed to it. This is reflected throughout the entire shop, in housekeeping, compliance with policies, and attitude. If you are a manager who is not committed to safety, you need to revise your own attitude and make that commitment.

Improvements need to occur in average hourly wages. The current average hourly wage statewide is just over \$2.00 according to the December 2001 quarterly report. I challenge each of you to reach that average in your shop by June 2003. If every shop manages to reach this goal the average hourly wage will increase statewide. A large part of increasing average hourly wages is to obtain work that pays well. Jobs that are long term, repetitive, and not too complex are best for this. Good job set up, and ergonomics, are another factor in improving average hourly wages. I challenge each of you to look at ways to improve individual productivity and improve, or seek, better paying jobs.

Employee and parental input is important. How do your employees perceive the workshop? What do parents, or other caregivers, think of the workshop? If you don't think this is important you need to find another job. The workshop is there for the employees, not the staff, and if your board and staff do not make the employees priority one, they're not fulfilling their obligations. Whatever you can do to improve opportunity for your employees is critical. Do you have a transitional program to help acclimate new employees and those coming in from schools or day activity programs? Do you have a program to evaluate an employee for work in a competitive job? Do you have businesses that will work with you in

providing employment opportunities for those people? Do you have a supported employment agency you can refer an employee to if they wish to move to another job? Do you have a staff person that works to improve individual productivity, solve personal problems, work with positive reinforcements, or otherwise assist employees? If not, why not? If you have a county board in your county, quite often, this is just the sort of thing they like to help fund, something that will help the individuals directly. Think about it.

A lot of improvements can be made, but it is up to you to make them. I worry about workshop boards, and managers, who are complacent, and perfectly happy with the status quo. That is the type of attitude that may very well kill the sheltered workshop program.

Change is a given in life. This program is not the same today as it was twenty years ago, and it will not be the same ten years from now as it is today. It is up to you to make it better. If you aren't continually striving to improve, you're losing ground, and I hope you wake up before it is too late. There are a number of people and groups who will change things for you, if you don't take the action to make positive change yourself. Workshop boards and management need to monitor the rehabilitation and vocational marketplace, as well as the business marketplace, and adapt to the demands of both. Those who don't may find themselves on the outside looking in.

Workshops are a business, you perform a service for other businesses, everything from packaging to janitorial services. You also provide a service for the Department by providing employment for people with disabilities. We pay you for that service. We expect something in return for that money, including some reasonable planning, and thought about the future, and how you can better serve your employees. Put your employees first and the rest will fall into place.

## ENVIRONMENT CONT'D

Let businesses know what you do and what services you can provide. Prepare press releases telling about the benefit workshops are to the community both from a business perspective and a social perspective.

Be positive and up beat. The light is shining at the end of the tunnel.



## TIDBITS

### Job Bidding

I have had three calls from managers lately concerned about competition among shops. Some have told me about situations where they were sure that they had bid the job very close. They did not get the job and when the customer was queried about competing bids, they were told that other shops had bid less than half of what they had bid. I can understand making a mistake occasionally on a bid and underbidding. A good way to guard against this possibility is to have another person trained in bidding and have your bids checked. Also two estimates, or time studies, on production standards would help resolve problems in this area.

My concern is that with the economic situation being what it is that there may be some shops tempted to bid jobs at direct labor just to get the work. I understand your frustration but I would just urge you to consider your bids carefully. The last thing we want is a bidding war among shops. This does no one any good, except the business seeking the bids.

### Compliance

Most shops do a very good job of remaining in compliance with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations, as required by 5 CSR 70-770.020 (Operation of Extended Employment Sheltered Workshops (2) The not-for-profit corporation which operates a workshop shall maintain substantial compliance with all federal or state statutes or regulations, or local ordinances at all times).

There is a small minority of shops that seem not to take these issues seriously. Our staff has, at times, made suggestions and offered to assist shops in becoming compliant. There have been lists made, suggestions provided, and even policy manuals on disk supplied to some shops, seemingly to no avail. In order to assure improved compliance in the future, the field supervisors and I will provide compliance comments and suggestions in writing during or following visits. Someone from our office will follow-up on these suggestions in 30 to 60 days. If concerns have not been significantly addressed in this period another letter will be written to the manager, and the board president will be copied.

There are some shops that do an exemplary job of remaining in compliance. These shops deserve a thank you and recognition. We may, on occasion, find situations that warrant commendation and provide such. Let's continue to work together

in making the workshops a safe, dignified place of employment.

### Training time

Please keep in mind that the purpose of state aid to facilitate dignified and meaningful employment for people with disabilities. The regulations clearly state that 'a workshop should have no less than seventy-five percent (75%) of its reimbursable time in income producing work'. Please make sure that you mark your attendance sheets to clearly indicate training time so we can verify compliance with this issue. As we perform the state aid checks we may wish to examine production and pay sheets to verify training time. It is critical that shops comply with this issue. During these tight budget periods it would not be fair, especially to those shops that have work available, to pay in excess of this allocated time.



For those shops that are extremely slow it is imperative that more sales efforts be made to obtain work. The economy is starting to pick up and there should be opportunities out there with some significant sales efforts. If work cannot be obtained, then it may be necessary to lay people off, just as any other business would do. If our office can be of any assistance, i.e. accompanying you on sales calls etc., please give us a call to schedule some times.

We realize this is a difficult time for shops and that layoffs are difficult for parents and/or care facilities, but it would not be proper to subsidize shops when meaningful work is not available.

### Year End Procedures

There have been some questions on year-end procedures. I just wanted to let everyone know what to expect over the next couple of months. We will disburse state aid for May at the first of June as usual. **It is absolutely imperative that you get your state aid request for May submitted by June 10.** We need this done so we can calculate what is left, in our budget, and disperse that amount by June 15. A delay in submission may adversely affect the final calculation and disbursement of state aid. If your state aid request for May is not submitted by June 10, we will assume that you do not need per diem for May, and allocate it to the amount left for distribution to all shops. Please submit your state aid report for June the first of July as you normally would so that we can determine the amount of shortfall.

## SHELTERED WORKSHOP PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS

### School to work cooperative program

Sheltered Workshop Programs for students with disabilities are limited to students with disabilities whose IEP team has determined that a student should obtain work experience at a local sheltered workshop. The student should be certified for sheltered employment in one of three ways:

- a. Referral to DVR or RSB for certification
- b. Referral to the sheltered workshop for certification by an Extended Employment Certification Specialist

Phases of workshop involvement:

- **Assessment:** This phase lasts from 60-120 hours and is used to address factors such as:
  - Job interests
  - Strength and endurance
  - Learning style and implications of job placement
  - Challenging behaviors
  - Mobility
  - Transportation needs
  - Residential setting and its implications
  - Family/caregiver support
  - Disincentives (SSI, Medicaid)
  - Functional application of academic skills (i.e. reading, handling of money, telling time, etc)
  - Communication skills
  - Effects of medication on functioning
  - Likely vocations and availability of jobs
  - Ongoing support available
- **Training:** This phase may be used by a district for a student who requires development of specific job skills in a work setting
- **Employment:** The employment phase is for students with disabilities who are typically in the last year of formal education and preferably the last semester of their senior year.

**Student Pay:** Students may or may not be paid during the assessment phase depending on type of work they are involved in. The workshop will contract with the school district for assessment costs on an individual basis. Students in training or employed by the sheltered workshop must be paid commensurate wages.



Please note that the schools should be drawing state aid during the assessment and training phase and paying the workshop their share of state aid. During the summer when school is not in session the workshop may request state aid directly from the department.

## PARTNERING WITH STATE AGENCIES

As many of you know our office has been working with DNR (Dept. of Natural Resources), Conservation, and Economic Development to see what opportunities might exist for contracting with workshops around the state.

### Department of Natural Resources

Gary Schneider met with several DNR State Park area directors last week and distributed some directories of workshops. If someone with DNR contacts you, please get a hold of your field supervisor, or call me as soon as possible. Some of you may not be familiar with bidding grounds maintenance job. We will be glad to help you bid these jobs if you wish. **IF YOU ARE CONTACTED BY DNR LOCALLY PLEASE DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY REJECT THE JOB, CALL US.** We have been working on making these contacts and do not want to discourage DNR from seeking assistance from the shops. If you are not interested in doing the work, a shop in an adjoining county might be, so please call us.

### Department of Conservation

Ken Wagner and I met with a representative from the Dept. of Conservation, Monday, at Capitol Projects and he has provided a list of counties that he is responsible for maintaining launch ramps, firing ranges, and campgrounds. This list of counties is as follows:

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Adair	DeKalb	Montgomery
Andrew	Gentry	Nodaway
Atchison	Harrison	Pettis
Audrain	Holt	Pike
Benton	Howard	Platte
Boone	Johnson	Putnam
Buchanan	Knox	Ralls
Caldwell	Lafayette	Randolph
Callaway	Lewis	Ray
Carroll	Lincoln	Saline
Cass	Linn	Schuyler
Chariton	Livingston	Scotland
Clark	Macon	Shelby
Clinton	Marion	St Charles
Cole	Mercer	Sullivan
Cooper	Moniteau	Warren
Daviess	Monroe	Worth

Please look over this list and if your county or an adjacent county is listed and you would be interested in pursuing any contract work with Conservation please give me a call or email me. I will ask your field supervisor to get a list of the Conservation areas in that county and work with you, if you wish, on developing a bid. These jobs entail cutting grass, cleaning privies, and trash collection.

### Economic Development

Thanks to the fact that one of Susan Legaard's former legislators is now one of the directors of Economic Development, we were able to set up a meeting with their top staff for June 4 to discuss and brainstorm opportunities for the workshops. Steve Frank, the new president of the Manager's Association, and Stan Shurmantine, the vice president, have agreed to attend that meeting as well. We will keep you posted on ideas that might surface.

By the way Susan, thank you for making such a positive impact on your legislator.



We are still a long ways from any contracts with these agencies, but at least we have some willing ears. Please make every effort, should you be contacted by any state agencies, to keep that interest alive. Please talk to your field supervisor, or myself, before rejecting any job opportunities.

Some of you may not feel comfortable with sending work crews out to do this type of work, but

keep in mind that those shops that began the rest area contracts for the Missouri Highway and Transportation Department probably felt the same way when they began. I was concerned myself when our shop began a NISH janitorial and grounds maintenance contract in Springfield, but let's remain positive and try to figure out ways to make this work if opportunities come up and continue to improve employment options for people with disabilities.

### WORKSHOP PARTNERING

Many shops, especially in the major urban areas have been sharing work with rural shops, or even other urban shops for a number of years. This has worked out well for both the contracting shop and the receiving shop. It has certainly helped to balance work around the state and keep more people with disabilities employed.

Examples of this sharing of work are too numerous to mention. I commend those that have successfully worked together to help each other during the ebb and flow of work. I wish to encourage shops that are currently doing this to continue, and for those shops who find themselves inundated with work to seek out partners to help with their customer demands. Some of the things that both partners need to consider are as follows:

The receiving shop:

- Evaluation of the pricing must be made to make sure that it is profitable enough, especially considering the extra transportation costs involved.
- Time is a consideration, especially with the additional transportation time. Can you honestly meet the deadline set by the sending shop?
- Does your shop have the technical expertise to handle the job, the necessary equipment, and the ability to assure quality control?
- Will you treat this job the same as you would any other job for any other customer?

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- Do not deny the sending shop their fair share of revenue on the job. Keep in mind that the shop that originally contracted with the customer is the one with their reputation at stake, and there are costs involved in making sure that the quality is good and handling, even on that portion that your shop works on.
- Under no circumstances do you circumvent the shop that is sending you the work and go directly to their customer, unless approved to do so by that shop. One thing that has severely hurt relationships in the past has been the stealing of contracts and underbidding. If your shop gets a reputation for this you will not be trusted and other shops will not work with you.
- Be willing to sign a 'do not compete' agreement to assure that you will not compete with the sending shop

The sending shop:

- Don't be upset if you offer a job to a shop and they decline. They could be too busy or not have the skill level to complete the task. The price may not be sufficient to justify them taking it.
- Be specific about the job requirements and **put them in writing**. Make sure that the receiving shop knows what the quality standards are, and what the quantity expectations are.
- Make sure you are completely honest with the receiving shop. If you find something wrong with what they are doing, or they're not making the deadline specified, talk to them. Keep communications open.
- Let your vendor know what you are doing and make sure it is okay with them.
- Have the receiving shop sign a 'do not compete' agreement.

Some shops have built a relationship over the years with each other and feel comfortable sharing work. Remember that each relationship had a beginning at one time. Reach out and make some more beginnings. There are several shops that are just swamped with work currently and

other who are extremely slow. Partnering has become more common over the years because of improved trust, professionalism, and networking. Let's build on this and keep more people working.

"In business, you don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate."

- *Chester L. Karrass*



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